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Senate

Statement of Senator Dianne Feinstein

"On the Iraq and Afghanistan Supplemental Conference Report"

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for the \$87 billion Supplemental Conference Report, and I want to take a few minutes to explain why I support this Conference Report, even though I have serious misgivings about some of its provisions.

I support this Conference Report because I believe the United States now has an inescapable responsibility in Iraq.

We must stay the course and to do that, we must provide our troops in the field with the resources necessary to complete their mission. The Defense title of this Conference Report provides nearly \$65 billion for that purpose, including important funding to improve the safety of our troops by securing Iraqi small arms caches which are the source of much of the munitions used to attack U.S. forces.

We must rebuild Iraq's infrastructure and assist in resurrecting a viable Iraqi economy. We must see that a stable government is put in place. We must prevent civil war. And we must see to it that Iraq does not become a base for terror and instability throughout the region.

Nothing could be more disastrous for U.S. national security than, after bringing about regime change, if our nation were to turn tail and run and not accomplish the mission.

We would send precisely the wrong message to both our friends and our foes around the world.

If the United States were to pull out without completing the job, I believe that we would see civil war and a return of the Baathist regime, perhaps headed by someone as bad or worse than Saddam.

For many of us, the challenges that we now face in Iraq illustrate the shortcomings of a doctrine of unilateral preemption and preventive war.

When we use force against a state and seek regime change we are left with an inescapable role: Nation building.

This Conference Report is not perfect. Far from it. But it is critical that we do not leave the hard work of post-war reconstruction undone.

When the supplemental bill was before the Senate, I did what I could to see if it was possible to structure at least some of this package as loans – and the Senate adopted an Amendment which would have made \$10 billion of the reconstruction loans.

That provision, unfortunately, was dropped in Conference over my objections and those of many of my colleagues.

I also worked with Senator Domenici to include additional reporting language in this bill. This amendment, which was adopted by the Senate, provided Congress and the American people real oversight over what the Administration's plans were in Iraq and how the money in this supplemental was being spent.

Unfortunately, many of these reporting requirements were also stripped out in Conference.

I also supported efforts to include provisions in this bill so that there would be greater international contributions to the reconstruction effort, to see if Iraqi oil could be quickly bought on-line to underwrite costs, to earmark some of the funds to be spent in Iraq on domestic priorities instead, and to try to pay for this Supplemental by deferring the large tax cut for those Americans earning more than \$340,000 a year.

So if I had my way in putting this package together we would have before us a very different Conference Report.

Unfortunately, all these options were either debated and voted down by the Senate when we considered this bill earlier or, in the case of the loan provision, stripped out by the Republican majority in Conference.

I would also like to note a provision of this bill that strikes close to home for me and my constituents. I am pleased that the Conference Report provides \$500 million for FEMA disaster relief activities associated with recently declared disasters, such as the wildfires in California. Representative Jerry Lewis and I sponsored this funding as a downpayment on what we all can expect to be a costly reconstruction effort in Southern California. We in California are resilient, and I hope that this funding will help us to bounce back quickly from the catastrophic fires still burning in California.

So in the final analysis, even without the inclusion of many of the Iraq provisions I would have liked to have seen in this Bill I have come to the conclusion that the United States must step up to the plate and meet its obligations in Iraq. The United States must win the peace in Iraq.

The United States must also seek to repair the breach that exists between our nation and some of our friends and allies in the international community.

As I stated on the floor earlier when the Senate considered this supplemental, it is my sincere hope that in the reconstruction of Iraq, the United States can repair some of this damage by working with our allies, the United Nations, and the international community.

The United States has lost a great deal of good will throughout the world in the past year due to the perception that the American attitude has become "our way or the highway."

We must signal clearly and unambiguously that our attitude has changed, and that we welcome the full partnership of others in the international community in Iraq.

Mr. President, on balance I find that

I must support this Conference Report. Our national security and the safety and well-being of our troops demands it.

Indeed, how the United States approaches the reconstruction of Iraq may well prove to be one greatest tests of American leadership since World War II.

To fail in this endeavor could well escalate chaos in the Middle East and Gulf region, lead to civil war in Iraq, and allow Iraq to become a base for terror. I believe that it is important that Congress supports this Conference Report and that we stay the course in Iraq.

I thank the chair, and I yield the floor.